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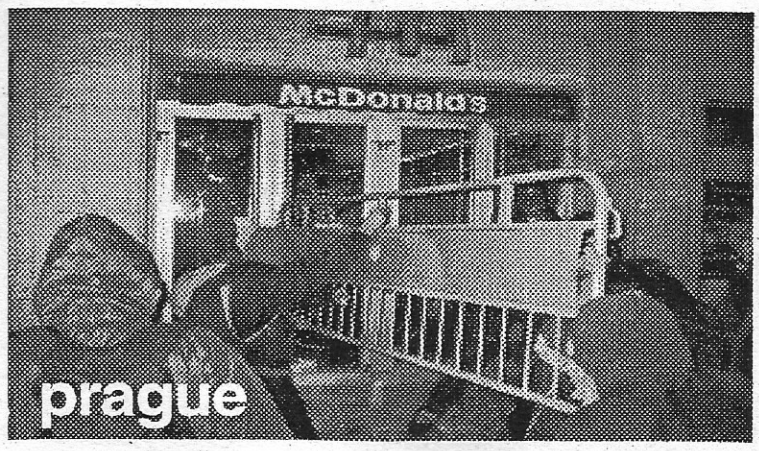
Anarchist news and views from Aotearoa/NZ.....#15 Sep/Oct 2000 FREE

melbourne



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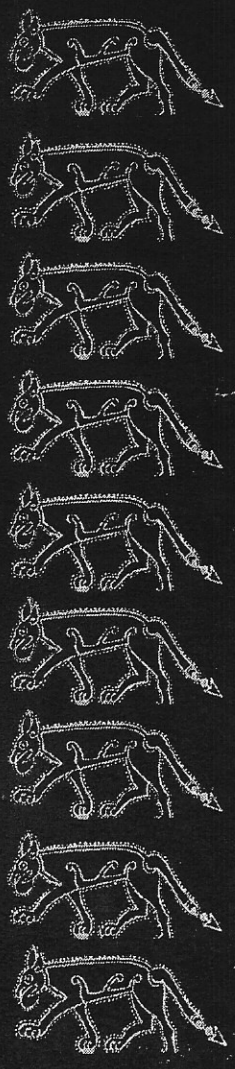


our resistance is as global as capitalism

police gang gets out of control

s26 carnival against capitalism, wellington

The Wellington September 26 Carnival Against Capitalism was organised by Wellington anarchist group the Committee for the Establishment of Civilisation (CEC) for the global day of action against capitalism and in solidarity with the protests against the World Bank and IMF in Prague (both held on Sep. 26). Like elsewhere around the world, a heavy handed police response disrupted the protest (see pages 6 and 7).

The carnival began in high spirits outside a McDonald's branch in Manners Mall to a lunchtime crowd of about 200. Food not Bombs gave away about 90 free veggie burgers and free cups of tea as a constructive anti-capitalist protest to highlight how many people are impoverished and unable to afford enough food because of capitalism. The turnout was excellent considering the weather had been wild, windy, wet and cold until just before the carnival. A number of people travelled from as far north as Auckland and as far south as Christchurch for the event.

People listened to speeches about the devastation caused by the IMF and World Bank, and solidarity statements of support to and from a protester in Prague from the leftist tino-rangatiratanga or Maori self-determination group Aotearoa Educators were read out. Music was played, red and black balloons were tied to trees, and hundreds of anti-capitalist, Food Not Bombs, anti-IMF and World Bank leaflets were distributed to passers by. The mood of the protest at this stage was positive and there was quite a buzz around the place.

BANKING ON OUR MISERY

Then after about an hour and a half the colourful carnival (full of red and black flags) proceeded around the corner to Cuba Mall to protest against WestpacTrust bank. As there are no IMF or World Bank offices in town, it was thought we ought to target banks in general to symbolise our resistance to capitalism as a whole. Westpac was specifically targetted because of its role in financing and profiting from uranium mining in Australia, and as a protest against banks in general and the role they play as essential capitalist financial institutions. Banks borrow capital to capitalists and thus enable them to "invest" in, and profit from, our misery.

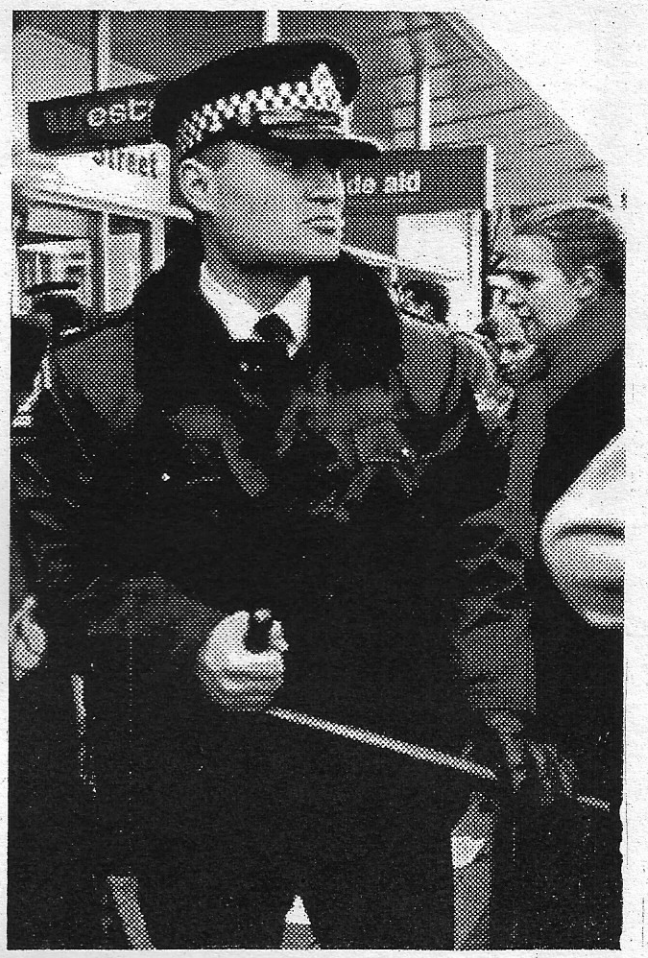
FROM OUT OF THE BLUE...

About 30 people managed to enter the bank to distribute leaflets explaining Westpac's role in uranium mining to customers. About 75 to 100 protesters remained outside the bank. The mood of the extremely brief "occupation" was friendly and non-violent. Police asked people to leave or be arrested for trespass and protesters complied with the order and began shuffling their way out. It was difficult to leave the bank quickly as there was quite a crowd near the door. Then from out of the blue a policeman suddenly picked upon a protester, grabbing her around her neck, forcing her out on to the mall outside the bank. This was an unprovoked, violent action which triggered off a series of ugly and tense scenes between protesters and police.

This led to a major scuffle between protesters and police outside the bank. A sort of weird surreal scrum developed for about 5-10 minutes between many protesters and a few police, surging up and down the pavement, with police pushing and shoving protesters around indiscriminately. Police withdrew from the scuffle and threatened to use their batons.

COP VIOLENCE: SEE WALLOPERS IN ACTION!

One protester was arrested and led away down Cuba St. to a police van (which had earlier been stickered with fluorescent "Capitalism? No thanks, We will burn your fucking banks" stickers whilst unattended).



Valiant, non-threatening policeman heroically protects WestpacTrust bank from a violent, unruly mob of anti-capitalist anarchist thugs in Cuba Mall, Wellington, Sep. 26.

The protest followed, chanting "police stop your violence". Some attempted to surround the police van, but were pushed back by police. By this stage, police had become irate and out of hand. As a result, many more protesters were arrested (many in a violent manner), often seemingly for no good reason. Some were dragged into the van. The protest became loud and angry. Many more protesters were threatened with arrest just for standing in the vicinity of the police. Some were shocked at the over the top police response to, and repression of, a friendly, peaceful demo that had not done anything in the slightest bit illegal (compared to overseas this may seem mild but in

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Contributions welcome, especially news stories, pictures, and news analysis. Special thanx to everyone who supplied photos (on disc and print) for this issue.

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cont. from prev. page

Aotearoa it is quite unusual...).

Then the carnival went back up to the Westpac bank, and held a demonstration outside of about 100+ people. A speech was delivered outlining Westpac's involvement in uranium mining. One hundred and fifty free cookies with "capitalism is crumbling" and "anarchy is how the cookie crumbles" stickers on them were distributed. Unfortunately, the police had earlier knocked over the cookie basket and crushed many of them. One protester was arrested for "wilful damage" for sticking an anti-Westpac sticker on the glass doors of the bank!

POLICE PARTY POOPERS

Then the carnival proceeded up Cuba Mall and listened to speeches denouncing the police violence. Organisers held a conference and decided to call off the planned third stage of the carnival (a mystery demo which was to target another capitalist transnational nasty) as they thought this would lead to more pointless arrests (police at this stage were picking off and arresting one or two protesters who were involved in the earlier Westpac scuffle).

In all nine protesters were arrested and four were injured at the hands of the police. There was widespread media coverage of the protest on TV and newspapers. Later in the day two branches of Westpac Trust were stink-bombed in retaliation to the unprovoked police violence.

– anarchist anonymous

Such a drag...Cop pulls protester across Cuba St.

wellington anti-capitalist teach-in

On the Sunday before the September 26 Wellington Carnival against Capitalism, the CEC organised a teach in about the IMF, World Bank and capitalism in general. This was held to inform and educate everybody present about the issues involved in the September 26 global day of action against capitalism. About 30-40 people attended. There were some good informative talks from anarchist speakers (about the IMF, World Bank, globalisation, WestpacTrust's involvement in uranium mining in Australia and the recent September 11 protests against the World Economic Forum in Melbourne), and from speakers from Aotearoa Educators, Trade Union Federation, Wellington Animal Action and SWO. The teach in was well received – there were some good debates and discussions, particularly about the link between war, NATO, the IMF and World Bank.

s26 defence fund

A S26 Defence fund has been set up to raise funds for the Wellington S26 arrestees who will be appearing in court. Of the nine arrested, eight have pleaded not guilty, and one has accepted diversion. All are being represented by civil rights lawyer Tony Ellis. A status hearing will be held on November 7 at the District Court in Wellington. If you want to make a donation to the fund please make cheques out to "S Moran", S26 Defence Fund, c/- CEC, PO Box 9263, Te Aro, Wellington, (e-mail cec@mad.scientist.com). One gig has already brought in some money, as has vege sausage sizzles at Punkfest in Wellington. A support group is planned also, contact via the CEC.

christchurch s11 solidarity demo

The S11 Solidarity Demo with the protests against the WEF in Melbourne (see pp. 4-5 & 8) in Christchurch went ahead on a bitterly cold and windy Monday afternoon at the amphitheatre in Cashel Mall, more commonly known to some as the grassy knoll. It had been organised by a coalition of anarchists, socialists and other lefty types over the last few months, which involved lots of trips to the pub and several public screenings of a video about the November 30 '99 "Showdown In Seattle" protests. The first screening at the WEA was a resounding success, with a large audience in attendance. There were a few cheers as a protester was seen kicking a can of tear gas back at a squad of riot cops.

Everything kicked off at about 4:30PM on the day, and we had a gathering of about 40 people around the old knoll, including the SWO (Socialist Workers Organisation), some Greens, a few local anarchists and their friends and Food Not Bombs, who ensured that nobody went hungry.

It was a small affair, probably due to the bone chilling cold which ensured that most people were likely to be more interested in getting somewhere warm than anything else, but all the same it was noticeable, with local media present and enthusiastic to ask us questions. We had been planning some street theatre, which didn't end up going quite to plan, but nonetheless provided some good footage for the TV cameras. Fake 20 dollar bills were handed out that were emblazoned with Mr Burns from The Simpsons and had some facts and figures about capitalism on the reverse side. They met with a good response and this reporter was asked about them by some guys I ran into on the street about a week later. Several people stopped to ask us what the protest was in aid of and the megaphone was passed around. Several of the protesters offered explanations for the evils of the WEF and one schoolkid took the opportunity to loudly denounce the criminal status of cannabis.

Later on in the evening Don Archer from the SWO appeared on the local CTV television news to talk about the protest. The enlightened host took the opportunity to accuse us of belittling the issue with our fake money but other than that it went well. *The Press* gave us a surprisingly positive report for a paper owned by Rupert Murdoch that has been known to distort the truth when it involves activists (Just ask anybody from the old Beneficiary Action Collective). What's going on there? All in all it was a good demo, even if it could have been bigger. Hopefully we put a bit of dent in consensus reality and a few people are more switched on to the evils of neo liberalism (or should we call it corporate colonialism?) than they were before.

– Lorax

auckland s11/s26

The Auckland S11 solidarity demonstration attracted (according to different reports) 50 to 100 souls. The demo went down Queen St. accompanied by a giant papier-mache corporate monster. The highlight of the demo was an hour long occupation of the Australian consulate (as a protest against the Australian government's involvement with the WEF), which was possible because there were no police present. The protest was organised by the "S11 coalition – Auckland", an "anti-globalisation coalition" composed of authoritarian state socialists (Trotskyist variety, two sub-species), a few anarchists and many anti-corporate protesters.

AUCKLAND S26 SOLIDARITY PROTEST

The Auckland S26 solidarity demo was organised by the same S11 coalition, the coalition suitably renaming itself for the event "the S26 coalition." The protest was composed of 50+ people. The demo began in the University of Auckland Quad, listening to speakers who went to Melbourne to protest against the WEF. From there the demo went and visited the office of TradeNZ (who manage New Zealand's involvement with the World Bank) and various banks in Auckland city. Despite a heavy police presence, there were no arrests.

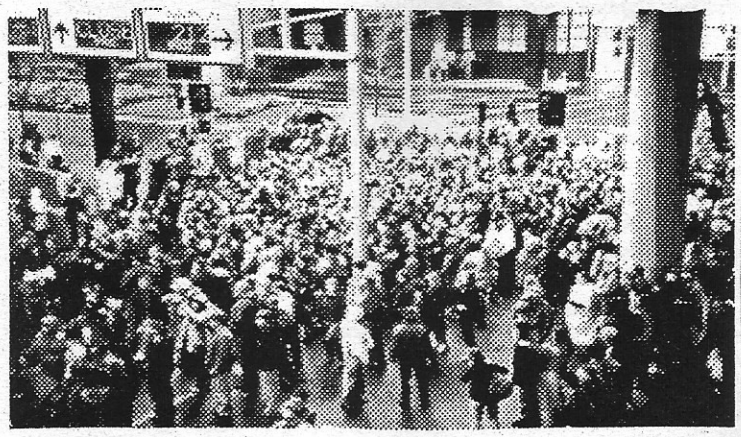
melbou

an account of the protests against and bloc

"WE'RE READY! – Police vow to stop S11 violence" – Headline in *Herald Sun*, September 9, 2000

September 11 – the morning I arrived at the blockade just before 7am on September 11. The first thing that struck me was the size of the Crown complex, which takes up two huge blocks on the south bank of the Yarra River. It is made up of Crown Towers (a hotel and conference venue) and the Crown Casino. Police had blocked off the roads running along the south and east of the entire complex (Queensbridge St and Whiteman St) and erected a 3m high fence (the bottom half concrete, the top half wire netting) around the buildings. The gaps in the fence were blocked by lines of police with long batons but without helmets or other riot gear. The protesters had set up a stage and a small tent city on the south bank of the river across Queensbridge St from the entrance to Crown Towers. The various political factions involved in the blockade had their own tents with bookstalls etc. There was also a first aid tent and a Food Not Bombs tent, which served food throughout the protest.

By the time I arrived there were already a thousand or so people milling around on Queensbridge St. Some of the marshals were urging people to move on to the other entrances, where delegates had already been getting in. I wandered round the corner to Whiteman St (south side). Fifty or so people had formed a human barricade in front of the police line protecting a gap in the fence. Just as I was about to move on, there was some shouting and the police began pushing towards the crowd. They generally pushed and shoved and quickly formed a corridor through the demonstrators, and a bus drove up and stopped. A group of WEF delegates got off and made their way through the gap in the fence and into the Crown complex to general verbal abuse from the demonstrators. The police then retreated back to their original line and the demonstrators again formed their human barricade in front. Round one to the police!



ROUND TWO: COPS LOSE!

I continued on along the south side of the complex to the main car park entrance. Crown had hoped to keep the casino open to the public during the conference, but demonstrators had already blocked off the car park entrance. There were three busloads of security guards (I think) waiting to get in, and while I was there several hopeful punters in cars also tried to drive through the picket line but were repulsed with a bit of agro but no violence. The chant of the moment was, "No one in, no one out". After a while the three buses also turned away and left. Round two to the demonstrators!

Soon after this a group of around 50 masked anarchists arrived with drums sounding and black flags flying - the Black Bloc! They marched past to cheers from the crowd of demonstrators, and were followed by a small contingent of media, obviously hoping for a bit of action! I followed the Black Bloc round to the west side of the complex, which is where the main pedestrian access to the casino is. I'd also heard that busloads of delegates had earlier entered via a road next to this entrance. There was a group of a couple of hundred blockaders there, plus the Black Bloc reinforcements.

ROUND THREE: A DRAW

After a while there was movement on the other side of the fence. Events followed a pattern which was repeated numerous times throughout the day whenever the police tried to get delegates in or out. Lines of extra police would appear from within the casino complex, followed by an ambulance (!) and often mounted police, who, when they weren't trampling and scaring the shit out of protesters, roamed around outside the complex throughout the day. There were probably a total of 20 mounted police (not the "hundreds" I read of in one report!). But they're still damn scary.

As previously, the police started to surge forward into the demonstrators lines, but this time there was a concerted effort to resist. Demonstrators from nearby rushed to join the line, which must have held for about a minute, but was then pushed back slowly as the mounted police joined in the melee. Punches were thrown, people fell and were hit by flying hooves. "Medics" were soon on hand to attend to the injured. A line of two cars and two or three buses then approached. The cars headed towards the "gap" but were swamped by the demonstrators, some of whom kicked the cars as they slowly tried to move through. One masked demonstrator managed to jump on top of one of the cars and did some serious property damage to the car's roof. He was eventually dragged off. I think the cars made it through (hard to tell with all the action), but the buses were forced to turn back. This encounter was definitely a draw!

BLOODY HUGE PROTEST

It was now some time after 9am, and the numbers of protesters on the Clarendon St side had been bolstered considerably by people who had taken part in the 9am "march and rally". Because the area covered by the protest was so large it was difficult to get an idea of the total number of protesters. The official police report said 2000, which was a joke. Maybe 5000, maybe 10,000. Who knows. It was bloody huge! By this stage Clarendon St had been blocked off by the protesters, who also erected a makeshift barricade. Cars were forced to make a u-turn over the median strip to escape. Police later closed off the road at both ends, and it remained blocked off till the Wednesday (September 13).

After a while I headed back around to the south side of the complex, to where a raised section of road (Kings Way) actually runs through the casino building. There is a ramp running off this raised section down to the casino, and police were trying to get a busload of delegates through. Here the police made a right cock-up of things. A group of demonstrators (200 plus) were sandwiched in between police (including mounted police) at the gap in the barricade and another smaller group of police who had come down the ramp behind them to escort the bus through. When the barricade police did their usual surge, some of the demonstrators fell back and started moving up the ramp, heading straight for the bus full of WEF delegates! The bus was forced to reverse up the ramp to the main road, and the police escort (20 or so) now found itself the meat in the sandwich! A few coppers lost their hats, which went flying in to the air to general applause and yells from the

rne s11

kade of the world economic forum, sep 11-13

crowd, but the police were eventually rescued by their "comrades". Meanwhile, a group of 50 or so demonstrators made their way on to Kings Way and blocked the traffic. As previously, a barricade was erected, and Kings Way was eventually "officially" closed off by the police. Demonstrators had managed to shut down two major thoroughfares near the heart of the city. Later that day police advised Melburnians to avoid the city for the duration of the WEF conference unless they were on urgent business.

MELBOURNE UNDER SIEGE?

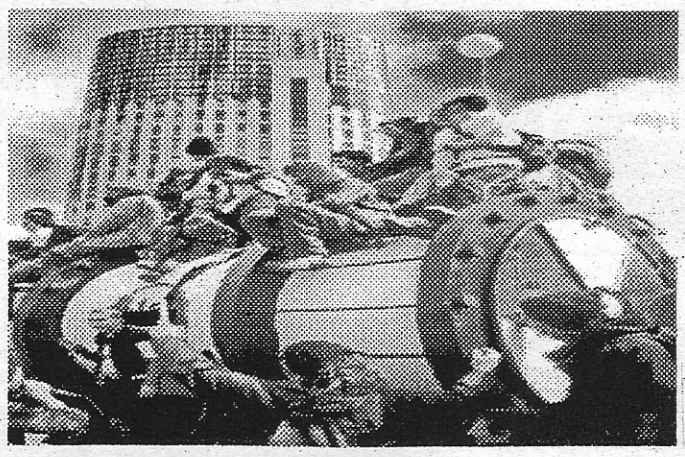
"SIEGE CITY – Police rescue premier" – Headline in the *Herald Sun* pm edition, September 11 2000 September 11 – afternoon. After a wee sit down for lunch, I returned to the barricades at around 1.30pm. I heard stories of the protester who had had his front teeth knocked out by a police baton and of police charges on demonstrators who had tried to prevent West Australian premier Richard Court and Opposition leader Dennis Napthine getting in by car. Court was stuck in his car for an hour after its tires were let down. Baton wielding police and mounted police were called in to rescue him. Napthine had his car covered in green paint and daubed with the slogan "WEF Kills". The police later publicly castigated the two politicians for ignoring their advice and attempting to get into Crown in their own cars.

The demonstrators' tent city was now a hive of activity. People were queuing up for food at Food Not Bombs, the various parties and affinity groups were holding meetings, and paper sellers were everywhere! Over a thousand people had gathered in front of the stage on Queensbridge St to listen to the lunch-time bands: Red-eyed Frogs, and Urban Guerrillas. There were giant puppets, people with drums, whistles and other instruments and people dressed up in all kinds of costumes, including a group of half a dozen "anti-capitalist clowns". Volunteers distributed free copies of "Melbourne Indy Bulletin", produced daily by the Indymedia people.

UNAUSTRALIAN – UNAPATHETIC

I wandered on down Queensbridge St, following the same route I had taken earlier in the morning. In front of the next entrance (where I saw delegates walk through at 7am) was a large trailer with a huge cylinder-like object on top, which was being used as a sound system and stage by some rap artists who entertained the blockaders and anyone else who stopped to listen. About ten young people where perched on the top and sides of the trailer. The rap was political, anti-WEF stuff, and got a great reception. Even some of the police on the other side of the barricade seemed to be tapping their toes! The atmosphere here was quite different from earlier in the morning. There was less tension, a party atmosphere even, although people were still sitting or linking arms across the gaps in the barricades.

Despite the carnival atmosphere, there was no doubt that the blockade was still in force. Graffiti artists had been busy daubing slogans in chalk and paint on the walls on and around the casino. The police barricade was also a popular target, with "Do not feed the animals" a common message. Other slogans included: "Open your eyes and realise their lies" "S11 unity" "Come on Aussie come on" (!? - Possibly a reference to John Howard and other politicians calling the protesters "unAustralian") "UnAustralian – Unapathetic" (*Definitely* a reference to John Howard calling the protesters "unAustralian") "We starve our children before the banquet of knowledge whilst politicians feast on the profit of war" "Keep warm, burn the rich" to which someone had added "They have cold hearts" "It is NOT inevitable that we become like them" "Fuck the new world order" "We live in a society not an economy" "No gods, no masters" "Kill your television".



SORRY, THE CASINO A'INT OPEN FOR BUSINESS TODAY

Further on round at the pedestrian entrance to the casino on Clarendon St (west side) things were a bit more tense. A couple of punters were upset at not being able to get in to the casino to lose their money, and were making an attempt to breach the blockade. They were quickly repelled and eventually left after a bit of argy-bargy and some heated verbal exchanges.

Not long after this (at around 2pm) the high school student march arrived. Much had been made in the press about how the evil S11 organisers had been "recruiting" children and training them for the "violent" protests, and so there was a strong media contingent on hand to greet the kiddies, who marched behind a huge red banner with the slogan "High School Students Against Corporate Greed". At a guess, I'd say there were over 200, some of them in school uniform.

DAY ONE MATCH REPORT

My overall impression of Day One was that the tactic of blockading the casino had largely been a success. Seeing those delegates walk through the barricades at 7am had me doubting that it was going to work, but later it became clear that many delegates (reports varied from 200 to 300) had not made it to the meeting. Some made it by helicopter, and Aussie PM John Howard was forced to travel by boat down the Yarra River! And the police? As in Seattle, it was clear that the policy on Day One was to avoid making arrests – only two arrests were made throughout the entire day. It also appeared that police had been under orders to avoid excessive use of force to remove blockaders, even if this meant that some of the delegates would not be able to get through. Perhaps this was part of a plan to justify the crackdown the following day. Perhaps authorities hoped that demonstrators would be the first to resort to violence. Or perhaps they just fucked up. Who knows. But the day was definitely won by the demonstrators.

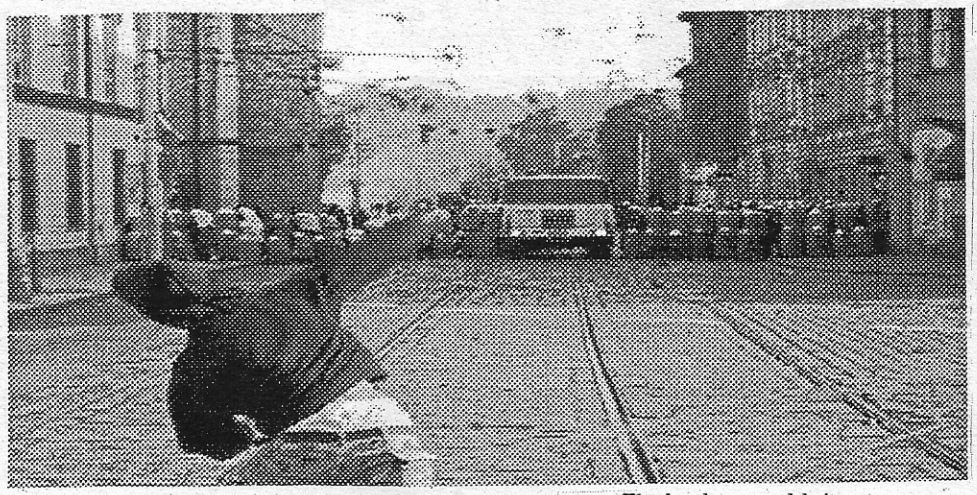
S12: WALLOPERS WALLOP AWAY

"CRACKDOWN – Police baton charge" – Headline in the *Herald Sun* PM edition, September 12, 2000 September 12. I arrived at the casino around 9am on September 12. Things appeared much the same as the previous day. Numbers were slightly smaller, but demonstrators were still blockading all entrances around the Crown complex. However, from talking to people it

cont. on back page

anti-capitalists cancel prague bankers' party

Sept. 26 – Another international day of carnival against capitalism. This time in Prague, capital of the Czech Republic. Cameras rolled, the TV showed the usual tear-gas riot scenes and McDonalds got its customary kicking. But what didn't make the news was that across the globe 45 cities in 20 countries took part in solidarity actions against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), which was having its annual meeting in Prague. (There were actions as far afield as Israel, India, Australia (2000 people marched in Melbourne, an impressive turnout obviously swelled by S11), Brazil, NZ, USA, Canada, UK, Holland and Sweden.) Also, hardly mentioned in the media were the hundreds of people stopped from entering the Czech Republic or those beaten up and abused in police stations. And of course conveniently ignored was why thousands of people took to the streets of Prague last week.



FAT CATS & CHUBBY CZECHERS

Maybe it was a bit of an ambitious demand: "We will lay siege to the World Bank and IMF until they dissolve themselves." But with the Conference abandoned a day early and the previous day's meetings poorly attended, there's no doubt that last the S26 mass demonstrations in Prague were a success. Fifteen thousand people came together from all over the planet to lay siege to institutions that have been blamed for "harming more people than any other non military organisations in human history" (David Korten). The protests were also a success because they drew attention to institutions that have thrived on anonymity. As the chairman of the World Bank inspection panel told our *SchNEWS* mole inside the conference, "The only thing the World Bank is afraid of is publicity. These protesters are creating that." Another, a Deutsche Bank employee from New York, was even more frank: "The protesters are right of course. We are just interested in the money. The World Bank and IMF are just helping people like us to cream it in. Isn't it great?"

TEARIN' UP THE CZECHS!

Up to fifteen thousand people mobilised from every corner of the planet; Bologna's Michelin-man stylee Ya Basta! anarchist group mingled with Czech Solidaritska, Catalonia's anarcho-syndicalist CNT and blocs from Poland, Germany, Greece and beyond. Latin Americans, Bangladeshis and Maoris traded resistance tips as the sound system kicked in. Groups divided into yellow, blue and pink-silver blocks and approached the Conference Centre from different directions. As the groups got near to the police lines all hell broke loose, with protesters trading cobblestones with stun grenades, tear gas and water cannons. The bankers couldn't get out, and we couldn't get in, and eventually delegates were taken out by underground – probably the first time a lot of them would have used public transport for a while. As darkness ebbed in, the remaining pink and blue crew wove their way northwards through the valley to meet the Italians who had blockaded the Opera house – the southern European anarchists obviously craving some higher culture after a hard day's street fight. However, the opera got cancelled and the bankers instead headed to the city limits for a banquet. These people really are down with the world's poor!

MCDONALD'S GETS REDESIGNED (AGAIN)

Protesters drifted to Wenceslas Square, scene of the Velvet Revolution, where ten regular cops stood sheepishly in front of a beckoning McDonald's. Within a minute and a half it received its ritual trashing. KFC followed suit, and by the time the IPB Bank got its share of broken paving stones several dozen Prague locals had joined in to reclaim a little power from the bankers who had foreclosed their business or refused them loans to feed their families. The riot police took their time getting there; just enough damage was done before the cops ran riot and the crowd melted away to pubs with decent prices... The next day you couldn't move in Prague without being pounced on by police. The WB/IMF cancelled the last day's meetings saying it was nothing to do with the protests. Honest guv, it was just that they had nothing more to talk about... "And as the delegates peer over the side of their ill-protected fortress at the crowds below, scanning signs that say 'Capitalism Kills,' they look terribly confused. Didn't these strange people get the memo? Don't they understand that we all already decided that free-market capitalism was the last, best system?" – Naomi Klein. (*SchNEWS*).

APOLOGY: *Thrall* apologises for quoting liberal academics David Korten and Naomi Klein in the above *SchNEWS* article. We won't do it again, honest. It is just that sometimes liberals say OK things.

czech police abuse & torture s26 prisoners

The Czech authorities mounted a massive operation in an attempt to ensure that the bankers' party went uninterrupted – 11,000 police were deployed in Prague, supported by armoured personnel carriers, troop trucks, fire engines, helicopters, tear gas, concussion grenades and water cannons. On the day itself there were few arrests but as night fell and in the following days, police started to randomly pick people up arbitrarily and soon nearly 900 people had been nicked. Many of the arrests were made by masked-up plain clothes cops who were one minute leading attacks on uniformed police and McDonalds and the next dragging activists away. In custody arrestees were often placed in overcrowded cells, denied access to food, warmth and medical attention and denied a phonecall and a solicitor. Some protestors were handcuffed to walls and beaten, others forced to lie spread eagled on the floor and prevented from sleeping. Some women were strip-searched and humiliated by male prison guards.

There are at least 20 international activists still in jail and another 70 are missing but presumed in jail. Up to 600 other Czechs are also suspected detained. They will almost certainly have to stay in prison until their trials, which could be something like three months. Donations (cheques/PO's) can be made out to Prague Prisoner Support Fund, and sent c/o RTS, PO Box 9656, London N4. (*SchNEWS*, early October).

resistance to capitalism is global!

a round-up of recent working class resistance to capitalism in the "developing" world

Resistance to capitalism and destructive IMF/World Bank policies is not confined to middle-class European students as the mainstream media would often have us believe. At the present time capitalism faces a threat from the working classes of various "developing" countries. The reactions of proletarians in these places to ongoing impoverishment and economic instability, allied with Governmental ineptitude or lack of authority, may prove uncontrollable. In the past couple of years, there have been various uprisings in:

ARGENTINA: people angered at IMF dictated government reform of labour laws staged a wave of general strikes in '99. In May this year cuts to social security were met with lively demonstrations resulting in public offices being set ablaze.

BOLIVIA: the privatisation of water thanks to the IMF led to a 35% price hike. As a result of demos the country was placed under a state of martial law, the occupation of the streets by the army, and radio stations being put under siege.

COLOMBIA: in August this year, 15,000 Colombians staged a general strike in response to IMF imposed restructuring programmes.

COSTA RICA: saw widespread anger to a bill outlining IMF policies. The resulting protests ended with police gunfire and beatings leading to the death of one protester.

HONDURAS: protesters staged a wave of strikes between May and July of this year because of significant cuts to their public services and a 48 hour general strike in August.

NIGERIA: this January, 5,000 workers marched in opposition to deregulation of the oil industry suffering vicious attacks by armed police for doing so. June this year saw the country crippled by a general strike and two police stations were burnt to the ground.

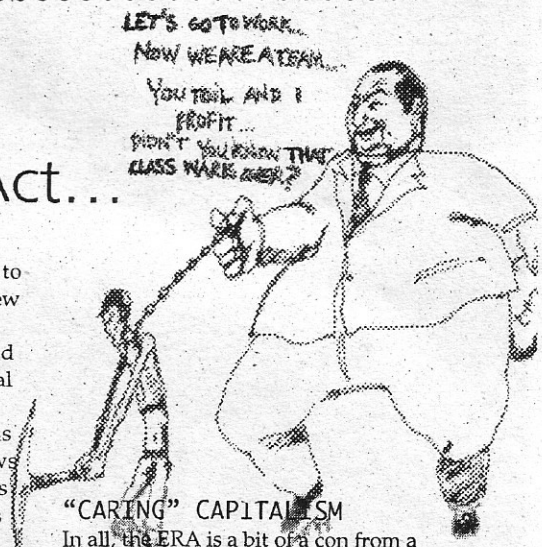
PARAGUAY: protesters and police clashed this June during rallies over 'non-negotiable' IMF reforms. A 48 hour general strike was later called.

SOUTH AFRICA: has seen a mass of actions at rising unemployment and labour market reforms whilst demonstrations were held at meetings of IMF and governments officials.

And finally, YUGOSLAVIA (part of the "developing" world after being bombed by NATO): in October very recently a revolutionary general strike involving thousands of workers overthrew Milosevic and burnt down parliament (but unfortunately installed a pro-free market capitalist friendly politician who in the end won't be much different from Milosevic to the working class of Yugoslavia).

Who said the general strike is an old fashioned, out of date method of struggle? Source: mainly *SchNEWS*.

From today, everyone is required to work against the Employment Relations Act...



The Labour-Alliance government's new Employment Relations Act (ERA) came into being on October 1. It is being portrayed in some sections of the media as some sort of victory for workers after bosses having it their own way under nearly a decade of sordid union and worker bashing under the old Employment Contracts Act (ECA). The media is basically reflecting the fear of bosses who are shit scared of workers getting uppity about their decreasing pay packets, crap working conditions, the ever increasing danger of industrial accidents as bosses cut corners to make more profits, and draconian anti-union laws that even Stalin would be proud of over the last 15 years.

BRAVE NEW ERA?

The brave new ERA ain't much different than the old ECA. The ERA retains all but one of the ECA's restrictions of workers right to strike (illegal strikes include political strikes, strikes over job losses, sexual harassment, damage to the environment, and solidarity strikes; I think only strikes over health and safety issues are legal); it adds a new 40 day strike free period at the beginning of contract negotiations (because of this new clause even the conservative, bureaucratic Council of Trade Unions describes the ERA as actually "more restrictive on industrial action than the ECA") and increases penalties for illegal strikes, raising the maximum fine from $10,000 to $40,000. As well, the ERA introduces new "industrial mediators" (read: special government bureaucrats to suppress and control uppity wage-slaves) in industrial disputes.

However, in some respects the ERA is better than the old ECA because it allows union organisers access to job sites, puts restrictions on the employment of scabs during a strike or lockout, gives union delegates leave for attending union meetings, and encourages workers to join the collective union negotiated contract. This means union numbers will finally be able to grow again after reaching historical lows under the ECA. Some seem to believe that the new ERA will magically revitalise a genuine grassroots workers movement which may eventually knock off the assorted vermin, vampires and scum that make up the boss class who live as parasites off our sweat & blood, but as noted above the ERA brings in the harshest anti-strike laws anywhere in the Western world, anti-strike laws which are pretty much the same as China! It is hard to see radical unions develop if they are not allowed to strike. Perhaps the first thing that workers ought to do collectively themselves to snub the ERA is to go out on strike – regardless of union blessing – to demand the right to strike.

"CARING" CAPITALISM

In all, the ERA is a bit of a con from a government that pretends to be leftist whilst it acts in league with the boss class. The Labour-Alliance government promotes the *image* that is different from the harsh bash the poor policies of the New Right, whilst in reality basically promoting those very same policies, save a few cosmetic changes. Perhaps their policies can be seen as the parliamentary equivalent of the new ideology of "caring capitalism" promoted by the tycoons of the "Businesses for Social Responsibility" such as Stephen Tindall of the Warehouse. With the Warehouse, the image promoted is that of a benevolent company that cares for its workers; the reality, Warehouse workers get shit working conditions (which causes high turnover of staff) and are then offered the comfort of a yellow company union, whilst Tindall rakes in profits that have made him the second equal richest person in Aotearoa (he was worth a filthy $310 million in 1999).

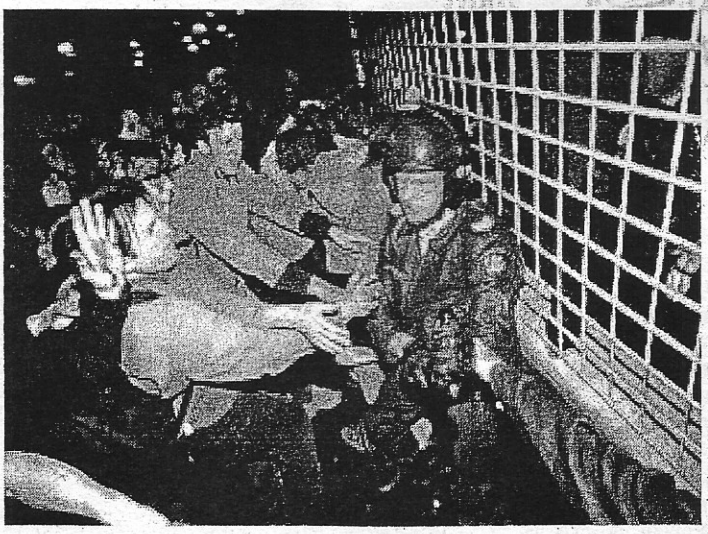
– Fydd

the protests against and blockade of the wef, melbourne, sep 11-13

cont. from page 5

soon became clear that police tactics had changed completely from the day before. At around 7am, some 200 riot police appeared from behind the barricades and attacked the 100 or so protesters who were defending the Queensbridge St entrance to the casino. There was no warning and no attempt to arrest the protesters. The aim was to clear a passage for delegates to be bused in and to inflict maximum damage. As one newspaper reported, it was "payback" time for the police. According to the *Herald Sun*, eleven protesters were taken to hospital after the melee, one with a possible punctured lung. One police officer collapsed with a heart attack.

A similar operation was conducted at the Clarendon St entrance to get the delegates out that evening, in what was generally regarded as the most violent episode of the entire three days. This time more than a dozen demonstrators ended up in hospital, and journalists (including the TVNZ Assignment crew) were among those attacked by the police.



Policeman gets isolated, Sep. 12

UNION BUREAUCRATS SELL OUT

The highlight of the day was supposed to be the union march and rally organised by Trades Hall (the main union umbrella group in Victoria). Throughout the build up to S11, union bosses had kept their distance from the other protesters, and had even played along with the media bullshit about protesters' plans for violence. But last minute negotiations had seen Trades Hall agree to lead a march to the casino at 10.30am on Tuesday, September 11. In the end, it probably would have been better if they had stayed on the other side of the river, as originally planned. The march was impressive enough, with up to 5000 unionists taking part. It ended at the stage on the south side of the river on Queensbridge St, where unionists listened to a few speeches before being given the rest of the day off.

Some chose to wonder around the casino. A few joined the blockade, but others verbally abused and taunted people who had spent the last day and a half putting their bodies on the line to make the blockade a success. Others crossed the picket line and overpowered blockaders to ensure that some casino workers could get in. This was a treacherous act against the likes of Food Not Bombs, who had supported the unions during the recent waterfront dispute and who were also prominent throughout the S11 campaign. Union boss Brian Boyd rubbed salt into the wound by claiming their actions in breaching the picket line "showed unions were the true voice of working class protest in Victoria". So much for the "spirit of Seattle".

MELBOURNE BLACK BLOC

Later in the morning I met up with some members of the Black Bloc. As in Seattle, some (but by no means all) anarchists in Melbourne chose to organise themselves into a single group wearing mainly black and with their faces covered with black or red and black bandannas. They would coordinate their actions with the other demonstrators, but not be tied down to a set location or follow the "directions" of protest marshals. The Melbourne Black Bloc consisted of about 40 anarchists, including some from Sydney and New Zealand. Some were members of long-standing affinity groups, but the 40 had only come together as a group a few days earlier. At times they acted as a single group, and at others they split into smaller groups, staying in touch by cell phone.

The attitude of the other demonstrators towards the Black Bloc was mixed. Some felt that the masks dehumanised the Black Bloc, and I must admit I found it difficult to have a conversation with someone whose face I couldn't see. But the Black Bloc did gain respect by giving their support when it was needed. Not long after I joined up with the Black Bloc members, a marshal came up and explained that some unionists were trying to get people through the blockade and could they please come and help!

Apart from the Black Bloc, the anarchist presence at Melbourne took the form of individual protesters with black flags, smaller groups like Food Not Bombs and the IWW who operate according to basically anarchist principles, and the anarchist symbol (the circle A), which along with other graffiti could be seen on nearly every available wall, footpath and lamp post on and around the casino by the Tuesday. I also spotted some anarchist posters, but it was a pity that an anarchist book or information stall could not have been organised within the tent city on Queensbridge St. Every other political group in Melbourne seemed to have set up a table, along with the Falun Gong, who had quite an impressive display outlining the oppression they faced in China.

COLLECTIVE SELF-DEFENCE, NOT NON-VIOLENCE?

That's about it. I'm sure I don't have to remind everyone that this account is based on my own personal observations and opinions. Don't rely on what I've told you. Read the eyewitness accounts on the Indymedia site [www.melbourne.indymedia.org] and talk to other people who were there.

So where to from here? I was impressed by the restraint and commitment to non-violence demonstrated by protesters in Melbourne. But one thing we should learn from Melbourne (and Seattle) is that as far as the cops and media is concerned, it doesn't make a difference. As long as we stand up to the bastards we're considered fair game. Peaceful blockades are now considered acts of violence by the press. Dozens of people ended up in hospital, including a woman who was run over by an unmarked police car. Perhaps its time to change tactics, if only to prevent so many of our people getting injured. Gone are the days when police issued warnings and then moved in to make arrests. Now it's in with the batons and horses (or tear gas and pepper spray) without warning. I'm pretty sure sitting down and linking arms is not the best way to defend oneself against this kind of attack. Any suggestions?

– Max